

Organizing The Left Wing In The Trade Unions.

To help speed up the intellectual and structural development of the trade union movement, to assist in hastening its natural evolution from a craft to an industrial basis, — this is the task set for itself by an organization just lunched in Chicago, called the Trade Union Educational League. Its national secretary is Wm. Z. Foster, formerly secretary-treasurer of the National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers, the committee which conducted the recent great organizing campaign and strike in the steel industry.

When requested for a detailed statement of the purposes of the new organization, Mr. Foster said:

"Unquestionably the supreme need of labor at this time is a greater solidarity among its fighting forces. Faced by massed and aggressive organizations of employers, the only way the workers can avoid crushing defeat is by bringing about a similar consolidation and militancy in their own ranks. The scattered companies and regiments of the trade union movement

must be united into powerful divisions and armies. The days of usefulness for pure and simple craft unionism are gone forever; the era of unionism upon an industrial basis is now at hand.

"I say advisedly that the period of pure and simple craft unionism is gone forever. And I say it not because of the needs of the situation, or because of the theorizing of intellectuals that the time is overripe for a broader type of unionism; but because of the thousand-times-more-important fact that virtually the whole trade union movement, yielding to the irresistible force of circumstances, has now definitely abandoned the historic craft union policy of each organization for itself. This is evident, not so much in theory as in practice. The trade unions as a whole, those that are affiliated with the A. F. of L. and those that are not, are gradually resolving themselves into a number of industrial units, one for each of the basic industries in which organization of the workers exists.

The Evolution Of The Trade Unions.

"The unions, responding to economic pressure, are coming to better understand their common relationship and their need of a common fighting front. Gradually they are developing single organizations as wide as their respective industries. This they are accomplishing by a whole series of get-together devices, such as amalgamations, federations, departments, local and national councils, joint-agreements, joint organizing campaigns and strikes, extensions of jurisdictions to take into the unions the unskilled, women and negroes. Purely individual action of a single craft in these industries is practically a thing of the past.

"The significance of this evolution is at once manifest when it is noted that in the industrial divisions referred to there are about 100 large international unions, containing fully 90% of the entire membership of the trade unions, affiliated and unaffiliated. It means that practically the whole labor movement is gradually and unceasingly changing from a craft to an industrial basis. More speed upon our part is vitally essential, however.



The long road of craft unionism.